

Message

From: M H [m_e_walsh@yahoo.com]
Sent: 5/26/2023 12:25:52 PM
To: Downing, Jane [Downing.Jane@epa.gov]
Subject: Re: Cape Cod Times - 'End this nightmare.' Cape Codders Fear Environmental Effects of Machine Gun Range

I love this!!!

Sent from Yahoo Mail for iPhone

On Friday, May 26, 2023, 8:16 AM, Downing, Jane <Downing.Jane@epa.gov> wrote:
Thought you might enjoy reading this one – finally an article that mentions my name!
Have a Good Day
Jane

From: Mark Forest <mark.forest@capecod.gov>
Sent: Friday, May 26, 2023 5:43 AM
Subject: Cape Cod Times - 'End this nightmare.' Cape Codders Fear Environmental Effects of Machine Gun Range

'End this nightmare.' Cape Codders Fear Environmental Effects of Machine Gun Range

CAPE COD TIMES 5.26.23. BY HEATHER MCCARRON PAGE 1

IT'S NOT WORTH THE RISK". That was the prevailing opinion that surfaced during a May 24 hearing to collect public comments about a multi-purpose machine gun range the Massachusetts Army National Guard is proposing to build at Camp Edwardson Joint Base Cape Cod — a site that sits atop the Cape's sole source aquifer.

Hosted by the Environmental Protection Agency's Region 1 New England branch, the proceeding drew a robust crowd to the Sandwich Center for Active Living.

While some speakers expressed support for the project, most told agency representatives that, in the absence of absolute certainty that the range's operations would not result in new contamination being introduced to an already tainted environment, and potentially seeping into the groundwater, it should not be allowed.

Machine gun range on Joint Base Cape CodCape military base wants a machine gun range. EPA says it could be a public health hazard.

On first blush, the EPA's New England division is leaning in that direction, too. The office recently issued a draft determination that the proposed range has the potential to contaminate the aquifer and

create a significant public health hazard. But the agency is continuing its review of the project and is gathering public input through June 26.

The Massachusetts Guard is proposing the 1,000-meter training range on its KD, or "known distance," range that's been deactivated since 1997. The site already has about 40 open acres but would need to be clear cut to about 97 acres more. If the project is green-lighted, another 40 acres could come into play as part of a second phase, depending on funding.

The machine gun range will lose millions in federal funding if the EPA says it's a public health risk.

The Guard has secured \$11.6 million in federal funding for the project, but that would be withdrawn if the EPA's Washington branch issues a final finding that the range poses a risk to the aquifer and public health.

Jane Downing, chief of the drinking water branch within the EPA New England, Region 1, drinking water program, acknowledged the Massachusetts Army National Guard's "critical role" of safeguarding the state and the country, its long commitment to working with environmental agencies "to investigate environmental conditions" at the base and undertake cleanups from past contamination events, and its years of conservation work.

Over the past two decades, she noted, more than \$1 billion has been invested in investigating and cleaning contamination from past uses at the base.

Downing said the agency "will take as much time as necessary to understand the details of the design, operations and maintenance of the proposed project" in coming weeks.

As the review continues, she emphasized the EPA's "unique obligation under the Safe Drinking Water Act to protect sole source aquifers like the Cape Cod aquifer," which she described as "a vulnerable and valuable drinking water source for nearly 220,000 year-long residents of Cape Cod."

"In EPA's view, a preventative approach is reasonable and warranted because of decades of environmental impacts that have already damaged the Cape Cod aquifer," Downing said.

No evidence of new contamination, says base facility manager

Base facility manager Col. John Bagaglio, hoping to assuage concerns about the proposed range, said science done at the base over years shows no evidence that the active small arms training ranges, operated at the base under modern standards and using only non-contaminating copper ammunition, are introducing new contamination.

The Massachusetts National Guard, he argued, has a proven track record over the last 20 years not only of working with state and federal agencies on identifying and addressing environmental issues from past contamination, but also protecting the environment from new contamination, implementing successful conservation programs and protecting numerous threatened and sensitive species while also providing quality training for soldiers.

"The collaboration and partnerships between the Environmental Management Commission, EPA and the Mass Army National Guard has demonstrated that best management practices and adaptive range management have been developed for the safe operations of small arms ranges while protecting the natural resources of the reserve," Bagaglio said, noting all efforts "have been based

on extensive testing, monitoring and exploration of various technologies to mitigate contamination to the aquifer.”

He pointed out that the natural resources team on the base "has helped identify 43 protected species, which are more abundant at Camp Edwards than anywhere in New England thanks to active habitat management.”

A Cape Cod machine gun range would be only the third in the Northeast to offer soldiers required training.

Bagaglio said a requirement for soldiers to gain machine gun qualifications drives the need for the range. There are only two ranges in the Northeast — in Vermont and upstate New York — where the highly demanded training is available, and Guard teams from all over the region are constantly jostling to reserve training slots, besides giving up valuable and limited time in hours-long drives that could be used in training.

U.S. Congress members join voices against the Cape gun range.

The Cape's Congressional delegation — U.S. senators Elizabeth Warren and Edward Markey, and Congressman William Keating — voiced their reservations about the machine gun range via a statement presented by Elizabeth Rosario, deputy state director for Warren's office.

"The protection of this resource is and should continue to be of utmost importance," the delegation stated. "This sole source aquifer underpins the health and economy of this region and we must keep it safe, especially when consistent and clean drinking water supplies across the Commonwealth are under threat from contamination and climate change.” Cape residents attending the hearing mostly agreed.

Machine gun range called 'misguided proposal'

"End this nightmare," Sandra Faiman-Silva, of Falmouth, said. "We have paid enough for this misguided proposal after years cleaning up early contamination on the Upper Cape. Now is the time to permanently protect the health and wellbeing of our citizens, visitors and Mother Earth.”

Andrew Gottlieb, executive director of the Association to Preserve Cape Cod, also spoke against allowing the machine gun range, noting "we already have a highly degraded, impacted aquifer" and arguing that, even with the best precautions "the risk here is too great.”

Dax Ferris, of Sandwich, was among those supporting the range. He said those putting all of the blame on the base need to realize there are many other ongoing sources of chemical loading into the groundwater, including from fertilizers used every day on golf courses and residential lawns.

"Bullets aren't the problem, folks," he said, noting that as much as he loves a good game of golf, that is a luxury, while providing for proper soldier training is a necessity.

Frank DeCosta, of Falmouth, joined other residents in saying it's not a matter of supporting the troops or not.

"This is a health issue for the present population of the Cape," he said. "The reality is that the species we need to protect now on this particular issue is us."

Janice Marks, of Bourne, said, "frankly, I believe them" about assertions by base managers that the existing small arms ranges, and the proposed machine gun range, are not adversely impacting the environment.

"I think the pollution that's happened already, and that influences our concern, just happens to be an entirely different kind of issue," she said.

How to submit public comment to the EPA

Downing said eventually the decision will fall to the EPA's Washington office. If the administrator there determines the draft finding should become final, "there will be no commitment of federal funds that will be allowed."

Public comments on the issue can be submitted by leaving voice messages at 617-918-1800, or by sending emails to RISSAComments@epa.gov. Public comments will be accepted through June 26.

Heather McCarron writes about climate change, environment, energy, science and the natural world, in addition to news and features in Barnstable, Brewster and Falmouth Reach her at hmccarron@capecodonline.com, or follow her on Twitter [@HMcCarron_CCT](https://twitter.com/HMcCarron_CCT)

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